



1839—One Hundredth Anniversary—1939
St. Philomena Parish, Stonelick, Ohio
Rev. Edward P. Stuhlmüller, Pastor.

But another storm was rising. Events in Eastern Europe, again, seemed far away, and of little impact upon life in the Valley. But that would change, soon enough.

Chapter VII

The 1940's - A Decade of Change

Father McGurn assumed pastorship of St. Philomena in 1941. News from the world at large grew ever more disturbing. Europe was a tempest of Nazi aggression. England was already at war, and with it, America's northern neighbor, Canada. Still, there was little evidence of these momentous events in Stonelick Valley.

Mass was celebrated as usual on the sunny, early winter Sunday morning of December 7, 1941. The Great Depression was a fading memory, and the future seemed full of promise. But by mid-day, radios crackled with incredible and chilling reports; Japanese aircraft had launched a treacherous and unprovoked attack upon the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The U.S. Pacific Fleet had sustained enormous losses in equipment and, more important, thousands of casualties. Before the day was over, President Roosevelt had addressed the nation, prophetically proclaiming the "day that would live in infamy." Ironically, the most prophetic of all statements on that day was made by Japanese Admiral Yamamoto. Upon hearing reports of the attack from his officers, especially reports that the U.S. aircraft carriers were not in port and were undamaged, Yamamoto declared: "I fear we have done no more than to awake a sleeping giant, and to fill him with a terrible resolve."

Young men of St. Philomena parish, like those throughout the nation, either as volunteers or as draftees, were soon in uniform. Shortages and rationing followed for the civilian population. Once again, the rural nature of the parish eased the impact upon the congregation, compared to those in urban environments. The need for food products meant priorities for farmers for scarce commodities like gasoline and tires. Meat rationing had little effect upon families producing their own livestock. Still, no one was exempt from the pain of separation, the uncertainty and the anxiety that accompanied a family member being sent into combat overseas.

War was foreign to the American G.I., and not only geographically. Unlike the Axis countries, Germany, Italy, and Japan, and even some of the Allies, the United States had a relatively small "professional" military. And so, most U.S. servicemen were not "soldiers" at all, but bankers, farmers, teachers, plumbers, and mechanics. Suddenly thrust into the horror of large-scale armed conflict, these men responded heroically, but longed for peace—and home.

There were many who left St. Philomena parish to serve God and Country, and whose feelings and dreams were typical of their comrades. The "V-Mail" letters of Albert Seibert reveal the depth of attachment to the peace and tranquility of Stonelick Valley.

"V-Mail" was an attempt to conserve weight and space on overseas flights, made in those days with reciprocating engines and propellers. The homeward-bound letters of military personnel were